

## Using Pronouns

A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. The noun replaced, or referred to, by the pronoun is called the pronoun's **antecedent**. The arrows below point to each pronoun's antecedent. (Also see 758.1.)

The volleyball team was determined, so **it** won the match.

Coach Johnson said that **she** never saw a team work so hard.

The **personal pronouns** listed below are the most common pronouns used by writers. (For a complete list of personal pronouns, see page 762.)

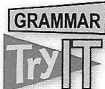
### Personal Pronouns

I	you	he	she	it	we	they
me		him	her		us	them

## Person and Number of a Pronoun

Pronouns show "person" and "number" in writing. The following chart shows which pronouns are used for the three different persons (*first*, *second*, *third*) and the two different numbers (*singular* or *plural*).

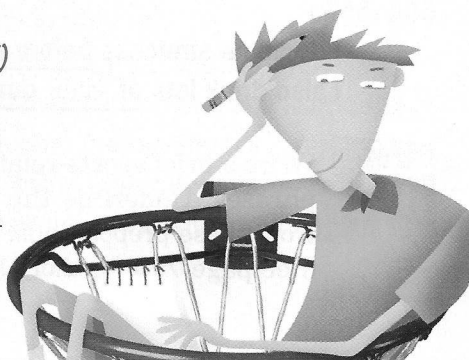
		Singular	Plural
First Person	(The person speaking)	I called.	We called.
Second Person	(The person spoken to)	You called.	You called.
Third Person	(The person spoken about)	He called. She called. It called.	They called.



Number your paper from 1 to 4. Write sentences that use the pronouns described below as subjects.

**Example:** first-person singular pronoun (*I*)  
*I want to join the basketball team.*

1. third-person singular pronoun
2. third-person plural pronoun
3. second-person singular pronoun
4. first-person plural pronoun



## Indefinite

known. They are plural.

### Indefinite

#### Some

another  
anyone  
anyone  
anyone  
each

Want  
other  
pronouns

## Learn

nouns  
below

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## Indefinite Pronouns

An **indefinite pronoun** refers to people or things that are not named or known. The chart below lists which indefinite pronouns are singular, which are plural, and which can be singular or plural.

### Indefinite Pronouns

Singular				Plural	Singular or Plural
another	either	nobody	someone	both	all
anybody	everybody	no one	something	few	any
anyone	everyone	nothing		many	most
anything	everything	one		several	none
each	neither	somebody			

When you use a singular indefinite pronoun as a subject, the verbs and the other pronouns that refer to the subject all must be singular. If the indefinite pronoun is plural, the verbs and other pronouns must all be plural.

### Singular

Everybody does her or his stretches before practice.

### Plural

Several of the boys do their sit-ups after warming up.

### Singular or Plural

Most of the time is spent on drills. (singular)

Most of the players are looking forward to the match. (plural)

## Learning Language

Pronouns are useful because you can use them to replace nouns. Repeating nouns over and over can be distracting to your reader. In the example sentences below, the noun and pronoun are in blue type.

Arun lives in my building. Arun says Arun loves basketball.

Arun lives in my building. He says he loves basketball.

Working with a partner, rewrite the sentences below using pronouns in place of the nouns in blue type.

Diana walks to school. Diana goes through the park.

This present is for Yvette. I hope Yvette likes it.

Pao left earlier. Pao will spend two hours at Pao's soccer practice.

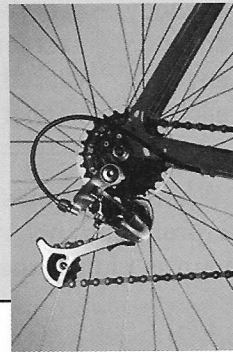
## How can I use pronouns properly?

### Avoid Repetition

You can use pronouns in your writing to avoid repeating the same nouns over and over again. (See pages 758–766.) Read the sample paragraph below. How many times did the writer use “Lance Armstrong”?

#### Without Pronouns

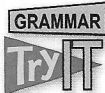
Lance Armstrong, a champion cyclist, was born in 1971. Lance Armstrong's competitive nature led Lance Armstrong to win the Iron Kids Triathlon when Lance Armstrong was only 13 years old. Armstrong became a member of the United States Olympic Team in 1992. Despite getting cancer at age 25, Lance Armstrong went on to win the Tour de France seven times by 2005.



Now read the revised sample below. The writer has replaced some of the nouns with pronouns. Which pronouns refer to Lance Armstrong?

#### With Pronouns

Lance Armstrong, a champion cyclist, was born in 1971. His competitive nature led him to win the Iron Kids Triathlon when he was only 13 years old. Armstrong became a member of the United States Olympic Team in 1992. Despite getting cancer at age 25, he went on to win the Tour de France seven times by 2005.



On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph of at least five sentences describing your favorite sport, game, or activity. Use each of the pronouns from the following list once. Be sure you use each pronoun with the correct singular or plural antecedent. When you have finished, share your paragraph aloud with a partner.

**Example:** Every tennis player has his own way of serving the ball.

his	its	their	he	them	her	they	it
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### Avoid Agreement

You can use pronouns to avoid repeating nouns or pronouns. Make sure the pronoun matches their antecedent.

When

Uncle

### Agreement

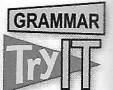
The man match the man.

■ A singular

Dad

■ A plural

All of the



Using  
sentences  
in his  
sentences  
identify

Each

The

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The



## Avoid Agreement Problems

You can make your writing clear by using pronouns properly. You must use pronouns that agree with their antecedents. (An **antecedent** is the noun or pronoun that a pronoun replaces or refers to.) Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number, person, and gender. (See 764.1-764.4.)

When Mom and Dad go golfing, **they** usually rent a golf cart.

Uncle Carl didn't know how to golf, so Dad taught **him**.

### Agreement in Number

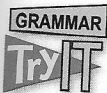
The **number** of a pronoun is either singular or plural. The pronoun must match the antecedent in number.

- A singular pronoun refers to a singular antecedent.

Dad has had **his** own golf clubs since **he** was 18 years old.

- A plural pronoun refers to a plural antecedent.

All of the woods have **their** own protective covers.



Using correct antecedents is important when writing your own sentences. Read the example sentences below (the pronouns are shown in black). Then, use each pronoun in the box below to write your own sentences. Read your sentences aloud to a partner. Have your partner identify the antecedent in each of your sentences.

#### Examples:

Dad plays golf whenever **he** gets a chance.

Golfers try to keep **their** scores as low as possible.

The pitted surface of a golf ball helps **it** fly smoothly.

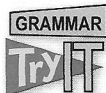
his	its	their	he	them	her	they	it
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## Agreement in Person

When you use pronouns, you must choose either first, second, or third **person** pronouns. If you start a sentence with one “person,” don’t shift to another “person” later in the sentence.

*Pronoun shift:* I have learned a lot about Babe, and with all that knowledge you can write an interesting report.

*Correct:* I have learned a lot about Babe, and with all that knowledge I can write an interesting report.



For each sentence below, change the underlined pronoun so it doesn’t cause a shift in person.

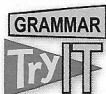
1. We are studying famous athletes in their social studies class.
2. If golfers knew how many sports Babe shined in, you would be amazed.
3. She was an incredible athlete, and we won 13 straight golf tournaments in 1946.
4. Babe won 82 golf tournaments in all, and you became famous on both sides of the Atlantic.
5. Babe qualified for five Olympic events in 1932, but, as a woman, you could compete in only three.

## Agreement in Gender

The **gender** of a pronoun (*her, his, its*) must be the same as the gender of its antecedent. Pronouns can be feminine (female), masculine (male), or neutral (neither male nor female).

Babe Didrikson’s father required his children to take part in a sport.

Babe Didrikson excelled in nearly every sport she tried.



Number your paper from 1 to 5. Correct each underlined pronoun so that it agrees with its antecedent in gender.

Babe challenged some old-fashioned ideas about his role in sports. Although best known for golf, she did not limit himself to that sport. He played basketball, tennis, and softball. Its participation in the 1932 Olympics led to three medals in track and field. The Associated Press named him Athlete of the Year six times.

What

Make

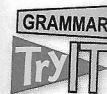
unclear  
plainly

Confuse

There  
sentences

The  
a pronoun

Ancient  
drawing  
Ancient  
hand



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people  
every year

## What else should I know about pronouns?

### Make Your References Clear

When you use a pronoun, don't confuse your reader by making its antecedent unclear. Make sure that the word your pronoun refers to is obvious; it should plainly refer to only one noun.

#### Confusing Pronoun Reference

**Ancient Egyptian drawings show some people playing handball. They were found in tombs.**

(Which noun—*drawings* or *people*—does the pronoun *they* refer to?)

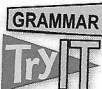
There are two ways to fix this error. The first way is to reword the sentences to clarify your meaning.

**In ancient Egyptian tombs, drawings were found. They show some people playing handball.**

The second way to fix the error is to reword the sentences without using a pronoun.

**Ancient Egyptian drawings show some people playing handball. The drawings were found in tombs. (or)**

**Ancient Egyptian drawings found in tombs show some people playing handball.**



Correctly rewrite the passage below that contains confusing pronoun references. (There are five.)

People played many games long before they were included in the Olympics. Field hockey, for example, is one of the oldest competitive sports in the world. It began with the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

Today, players use field hockey rules that were developed in the mid-1800s in England. They say that there are 11 people per team. Each team tries to advance the ball down the field to the other team's goal cage. Players can hit it only with the flat side of their sticks. Players can shoot at the goal only from within the "striking circle," which extends 16 feet from the goal.

Now, every four years, field hockey teams vie for the World Cup. When the 2002 World Cup competition was held in Perth, Australia, more people became aware of it. In fact, field hockey has gained in popularity every year.